

**May 2022**

**Making contact with students: guide for branches**

Many branches already have a good relationship with their local journalism college/department but, to help others forge links and encourage students to become members and get involved, this crib sheet and template letter should help.

Which local universities/colleges are you aware of that run journalism, photography, publishing, PR/marketing or media courses? Find out the best contact in the department. Are there any student newspapers, radio outlets or podcasts in your area? Follow them on Twitter and other social media channels – and please share this information with the NUJ via campaigns@nuj.org.uk so that we can build our database of members’ social media accounts.

Invite students to NUJ events and arrange for branch representatives to talk about the NUJ to the students or to be interviewed for class assignments. Would any students be interested in standing as a student rep or branch youth officer?

**When to arrange events and talks**

Ask tutors for permission to set up a stall or guest talk at the start of the academic year for first year or final year/masters’ students. September is a good time to introduce the union to freshers and May is the time to remind final year and postgraduate students about the value of membership and retaining membership after graduation.

Identify skills gaps or topics that students would like to know more about, such as freelancing, and tailor your talks accordingly. See the end of the document for event and talk ideas.

Email new student members to introduce them to the branch and key local contacts. Follow up in May/June as they reach the end of the academic year to remind them that support is there, and they can continue their NUJ membership if they are graduating.

It is important the union has up-to-date details, including a personal email address, which students can provide through their online profile.

**Template letter to local journalism college/university department**

Dear X,

I am writing to introduce myself as a member of your local NUJ branch and to ask if you would like to invite the NUJ to speak to your students about the work of the union and how it can help new entrants into the world of the media and PR. We can also provide speakers to any panel events you hold.

We would discuss our code of conduct, which has set out the main ethical principles of UK and Irish journalism since 1936 and the work and aims of the union. Our student members can attend the many events the NUJ holds with experts and prominent journalists, have access to training events and meet professionals from all fields of the industry

Student members are eligible for a press card that will identify them as a legitimate newsgatherers outside the campus.

We could describe some of the union’s recent cases: our famous victory at the Old Bailey defending Chris Mullin’s right to protect his sources – a vital tenet of all journalists. We won an important equal-pay tribunal hearing for BBC presenter, Samira Ahmed, whose pay was adjusted after she discovered a male colleague was being paid six times the amount she was for presenting a very similar show to hers.

NUJ membership can be a young person’s passport to a career in the industry and can assist them in many ways during that profession. If they have a problem at work, the union can offer advice, representation, and legal support. We have won cases where interns have not been paid the proper rate and challenge employers who are not paying at least the minimum wage. We can offer advice on work experience, internships and volunteering and we offer access to professional training.

Most of all, students and new entrants will be part of a collective voice challenging those who threaten press freedom and campaigning for a more diverse and representative industry.

We would welcome a conversation with you to see how we may be able to support your students as they begin their career in journalism.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXX

**Talk for students: bullet points**

**What is the NUJ?** it is the largest trade union for people working in the media, PR and publishing in the UK and Ireland and includes one of the oldest and most respected **code of conduct**, setting out the ethical principles of journalism: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/about-us/rules-and-guidance/code-of-conduct.html>

There are 6.5m trade unionists and the NUJ is a specialist, craft union which represents staff and freelance writers, editors, content creators, photographers and videographers, broadcasters, social media workers, publishers, illustrators and designers, PR workers and other media workers and journalism lecturers.

The general secretary is **Michelle Stanistreet** whose responsibilities include giving evidence to government inquiries and making statements to the press. She says: “Membership of the union and your NUJ card is a vital passport for your career in the media. Starting out in journalism can be tough, the competition is fierce – employers are quick to exploit new journalists. You need to protect your interests at work by joining the NUJ.”

**In the workplace**

By joining a union, you will not have to deal with any issues that affect your job on your own. You will have a stronger voice when tackling issues that are important to you at work, including negotiating your pay and conditions of employment or challenging discrimination. The union supports members and it actively campaigns against bullying and harassment.

**Freelances**

Almost one-third of the union are freelance members and the NUJ offers them access to professional development and the chance to network with colleagues. The freelance office provides advice on contracts, chases up companies which are slow to pay and handles disputes over copyright. Many journalism graduates will freelance at some point in their careers but often the skills needed are not taught in detail on media courses.

**Media freedom**

The NUJ is a campaigning union and defends media freedom when it comes under threat. We have a cross-party Parliamentary Group, and we collaborate with it to raise issues in Parliament, to scrutinise legislation which affects the industry and we take part in government and public consultations. We defend public service broadcasting – such as opposing the privatisation of Channel 4.

The union is part of the government’s National Committee for the Safety of Journalists and as part of that committee’s action plan we have put together an online safety toolkit to help journalists who have come under online or in-person attacks and abuse. A video link is available from campaigns@nuj.org.uk

**Supporting a diverse media**

The NUJ has published a News Recovery Plan, a roadmap which sets out a bold array of measures and interventions to support and protect jobs and quality journalism. This includes a call for a levy on the big tech companies, such as Facebook and Google, to finance public interest journalism and a Journalism Foundation to champion public interest journalism, raise funds and promote new models of news organisations. The union has been part of government working groups in Scotland and Wales examining policies to foster sustainable journalism.

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/news-recovery-plan.html>

**Part of a community**

NUJ members can contact each other to ask questions and offer solidarity and support. It is also part of the wider national and international trade union movement. Student members may attend their local NUJ branch meetings and other events.

**Useful case studies**

* **Chris Mullin** – the union secured an Old Bailey ruling against the West Midlands Police who were trying to get him to reveal his sources –the NUJ will always protect a member who is being challenged to produce journalistic materials to the authorities. He said: *“The right of a journalist to protect his or her sources is fundamental to a free press in a democracy. I am grateful to the National Union of Journalists for their unswerving support and to my legal representatives, Louis Charalambous and Gavin Millar QC.”*
* <https://www.nuj.org.uk/learn/resources/resource-library-search.html?topic=chris-mullin>
* **Samira Ahmed** – was represented by the NUJ and won a landmark equal pay tribunal after discovering a male colleague was earning six times more than she was for presenting a remarkably similar programme. The union has won millions of pounds for members at the BBC and other workplaces. Every day during the tribunal, Michelle Stanistreet and BBC NUJ members walked alongside her. When she won the case she said: “I couldn't help hugging Michelle.” <https://www.nuj.org.uk/learn/resources/resource-library-search.html?topic=samira-ahmed>
* **Andy Aitchison –** was arrested while covering a protest at Napier Barracks, Folkestone, and had his equipment and memory card seized. Following intervention from the NUJ, questions were asked in the House of Commons and he received support from his local MP. His equipment was returned, and he received an apology from the police. We will always resist any production order – when the police try to take journalistic material – and have stopped the seizure of material from many members. He said: “Whenever I have needed the NUJ, they have come into their own. Their support, emotionally and legally, was incredible. I’ll always be thankful to the NUJ.”<https://www.nuj.org.uk/learn/resources/resource-library-search.html?topic=andy-aitchison>
* **Keri Hudson** – the NUJ won the first tribunal hearing over Kerry’s unpaid internship at TPG Web Publishing. The tribunal was told that she had worked each day from 10am to 6pm and had been given responsibility for a team of writers, as well as training, delegating, collating briefs, scheduling articles and hiring new interns. Despite this, the company told her that she was not eligible for payment as she was considered an intern. The tribunal ruled that Keri was an employee in law, despite the lack of a written contract, and was entitled to be paid at least the national minimum wage and holiday pay.

**Equality**

The union has an Equality Council, Black Members’ Council, Disabled Workers’ Council and 60+ Council – they all fight for a representative media and negotiate with employers when members need extra support. We have an LGBT+ network and support young members to get directly involved at all levels of the union.

**Free magazines and newsletters**

NUJ student members receive the Journalist magazine, NUJ Informed and NUJ Active which lists events and training and bursary opportunities.

**International work**

The NUJ is an affiliate and close partner of the International Federation of Journalists and works with the IFJ to expose governments which are undermining press freedom and lobby on behalf of journalists who have been jailed for doing their job. <https://www.ifj.org/>

**Charities**

**NUJ Extra** is a registered charity which helps members and their dependants in times of need. The **George Viner Memorial Foundation** provides bursaries for black and minority ethnic students.

**Professional development and skills training**

The union provides free or subsidised workshops and training courses, helping members to diversify and adapt to changes in the industry.

**Materials**

The NUJ student recruitment poster: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/nuj-student-leaflet.html>

Exploiting the Dream work-experience guidance: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource-report/exploiting-the-dream.html> gives information on internships, how to get the best out of work experience and volunteering. Hard copies can be ordered from campaigns@nuj.org.uk

**Recruitment posters** etc: can be found on the website and cover the range of work the unions does: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/recruit/recruitment-resources.html>